

Finance Committee Meeting

November 3, 2021 7:00 PM EST
Veterans Memorial Building – Room #229
Millis, MA 02054

Zoom Remote Platform

In Attendance:

Pete Berube, Chair
Jodie Garzon, Vice Chair – Remote
Doug Riley, Clerk - Remote
Joyce Boiardi
Cathy MacInnes
Sara Reyes – Remote
John Steadman
Peter Underhill – Remote

Invited Guest:

Michael Guzinski, Town Administrator – Remote
Carol Johnston, Finance Director
Erin Underhill, Select Board Vice Chair – Remote
James McKay, DPW Director
Donna Cabibbo, Town Moderator – Remote
James McCaffrey – Remote
Lisa Hardin, Town Clerk
Kathi Smith, Assistant Town Clerk
Nathan Schneider, Resident – Remote
Loring Barnes, Resident – Remote

Pete Berube called the Finance Committee Meeting to order at 7:01 PM.

Open Pre-Town Meeting/Public Hearing:

Pete Berube opened the Finance Committee's Pre-Town Meeting/Public Hearing at 7:01 PM. The Fall Town Meeting will be held on Monday, November 8, 2021 at 7:30 PM at the Middle/High School Auditorium located at 245 Plain Street. The Finance Committee Report, distributed to all town residents, includes the Finance Committee's recommendations to Town Meeting for each Warrant Article. The Finance Committee's Chair, Pete Berube, highlighted a few notable articles in his letter included in the committee's report. He asked the Finance Committee Members to notify him if they are unable to attend Town Meeting; the meeting will be held in person as opposed to hybrid.

Article #1 – Unpaid Bills:

Jodie Garzon: This article will fund invoices incurred in previous Fiscal Years which have not been paid for various reasons. The total amount is \$14,348.02. The Finance Committee recommends approval Article #1.

Tonight's meeting summarizes each article in anticipation of residents' inquiries; the entire motion will be read at Town Meeting. At Town Meeting, the Finance Committee Member assigned to each article, makes a motion which is seconded and the motion is recognized by the Moderator. Further discussion includes the member's synopsis of the article. If three Finance Committee Members voted against an article, they have an opportunity to present a Minority Report. Additional participants at Town Meeting include the Select Board, Town Administrator, Finance Director and Town Counsel, all can address inquiries on Warrant Articles. The Warrant Article is then voted by the participants at Town Meeting.

Cathy MacInnes noted that Article #4 – PFAS Water Treatment Plant, will be a great burden on the Water Utility payors. However, relief from the ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) in the amount of \$2.4 million is expected to offset a portion of the costs. A Borrowing of \$5.6 million surely will prompt a number of questions. James McKay will be in attendance to answer any questions at Town Meeting regarding this article.

Lisa Hardin requested the committee provide the Town Clerk's Office with any prepared Finance Committee Member statements for each article. The Town Clerk is responsible for writing Town Meeting Minutes. If clarification is needed, the committee members are more than willing to share the information with the Town Clerk. The Finance Committee Member's synopsis of each article is included in the Finance Committee's Report.

Article #2 – FY 22 Operational Budget Adjustments:

Jodie Garzon, assigned Article #2, did not vote in favor of the amended article; the committee amended the article by excluding the funding of a Town-Wide Social Worker in the amount of \$60,000.00 with HCA Marijuana Impact Funds. The motion to amend the article was voted 6/3, therefore the motion carried.

The article is requesting \$50,000.00 from Free Cash to increase the Fire Repair Fund, \$15,000.00 from Free Cash to supplement the SEIU Collective Bargaining Agreement, \$214,000.00 from Water Enterprise Funds for Water Tank Maintenance, and \$184,478.00 from HCA Marijuana Impact Funds to fund various positions and additional hours at the Library.

The motion presented at Town Meeting is the recommendation from the Finance Committee which excludes the Town-Wide Social Worker. Jim McCaffrey clarified that an amended motion at Town Meeting would be needed to fund the \$60,000.00 for the Town-Wide Social Worker. Mike Guzinski confirmed that the motions made at Town Meeting reflect the Finance Committee's recommendations to Town Meeting; any and all motions can be amended at Town Meeting if the attendees so choose.

Joyce Boiardi, after discussions with teachers and other school officials, recognized the impact COVID-19 has had on children and the need to provide extra services. Pete Berube noted the committee deliberated this item extensively.

Joyce Boiardi made a motion to reconsider Article #2 to include the Town-Wide Social Worker in the amount of \$60,000.00; Peter Underhill seconded. Roll Call Vote: Pete Berube – aye, Jodie Garzon – aye, Doug Riley – nay, Joyce Boiardi – aye, Cathy MacInnes – nay, Sara Reyes – aye, John Steadman – nay, Peter Underhill – aye. Vote: 5/3 motion carries.

Joyce Boiardi made a motion to recommend Article #2 to include the Town-Wide Social Worker in the amount of \$60,000.00 thereby increasing the HCA Marijuana Impact Fee Appropriation from \$184,478.00 to \$244,478.00; Peter Underhill seconded.

Further discussion: Doug Riley asked for clarification on the details of the position; who the individual reports to, what percentage of time is split between the School and Municipal Departments as well as the accountability of the position. The position as a whole is undefined and the need to fund completely with HCA Marijuana Impact Fees has not been demonstrated. Pete Berube agreed, the details are vague and a definitive answer will not be available this evening. If the need is due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, perhaps there are resources available through the CARES (Coronavirus Aid Relief and Economic Security) Act. Conceivable, after the position is defined, it could be considered at the Spring 2022 Town Meeting. Cathy MacInnes agreed, the Finance Committee Members do not disagree with the position but would like it better defined.

Carol Johnston noted all CARES Act spending had to be made by October 29, 2021 although the claims can be submitted through December 31, 2021. The town has very little available in the CARES Act. If the Federal Government provides more COVID-19 relief, funding a Town-Wide Social Worker could be considered.

The Select Board supports all the Warrant Articles as presented but have not voted specifically on the Finance Committee's initial recommendation to remove the Town-Wide Social Worker from Article #2. They have met with the School Superintendent with regards to this article and are considering adding the position at the Spring Town Meeting. The specifics of the position have yet to be hashed out. The position could assist with the Senior population as well as Veterans.

Roll Call Vote: Pete Berube – nay, Jodie Garzon – nay, Doug Riley – nay, Joyce Boiardi – aye, Cathy MacInnes – nay, Sara Reyes – aye, John Steadman – nay, Peter Underhill – aye. Vote: 3/5 motion does not carry.

Article #3 – Capital Items:

Pete Berube: Article #3 funds (14) Capital Items of which \$495,348.75 will be funded by Free Cash, \$12,508.75 from Water Enterprise Funds, \$12,508.75 from Sewer Enterprise Funds and \$12,508.75 from Stormwater Enterprise Funds for a total of \$532,875.00. The Finance Committee recommends approval of this article. The Capital Planning Committee's assessment of the town's Capital Needs considered urgency and the overall benefit to the town. The Capital Planning Committee consists of a member from the Select Board, School Committee, Finance Committee and Members at Large. The Capital Items were prioritized and presented to the Select Board and Finance Committee for consideration. Two Fire and Rescue Capital Items, Ambulance and Fire Engine, were priorities but are separate articles due to the need to fund through borrowing which requires a Two-Thirds Vote at Town Meeting whereas Article #3 requires a Majority Vote. The Finance Committee recommends approval of Article #3.

Article #4 – PFAS Water Treatment Plant:

Cathy MacInnes: This article will appropriate \$5.6 million to build a Water Treatment Plant to mitigate PFAS in Wells #1 and 2, also known as the D'Angelis Water Treatment Plant. The article requires a Two-Thirds Vote; it will be a borrowing through the Water Enterprise Fund. The Finance Committee recommends approval of Article #4.

Article #5 – New Ambulance:

Peter Underhill: This article will appropriate \$370,000.00 through borrowing to purchase a new ambulance. The last two inspections of A1 have noted considerably frame and body rot. If approved, A1's replacement will not be delivered until August 2022. The Finance Committee recommends approval of Article #5.

Article #6 – New Fire Engine:

Pete Berube: This article will appropriate \$750,000.00 through borrowing to purchase a new Fire Engine. The new Fire Engine will replace a 34-year-old piece of apparatus which has failed State Inspections and the lead time on delivery is eighteen months. The Finance Committee recommends approval of Article #6.

Article #7 – Senior Work Program Tax Abatement Adjustment:

Sara Reyes: This article will increase the Senior Work Program Tax Abatement from \$1,350.00 to \$1,500.00 annually to meet the State Minimum Wage. The Finance Committee recommends approval of Article #7.

Article #8 – Stormwater ByLaw Regulation Amendment:

Peter Underhill: This article will amend the Town's Stormwater ByLaw Regulation by setting bottom floor elevation at a minimum two feet above Seasonal High Ground Water Elevation. The amendment was proposed by the Board of Health after consultation with building contractors for new developments. Jodie Garzon clarified that the Finance Committee's vote on an article does not have to mirror the required vote at Town Meeting; Majority or Two-Thirds. The committee's vote to recommend this article was 5/4, therefore, the Finance Committee recommends approval of Article #8.

Article #9 – Request Special Act – Town Charter Changes:

Doug Riley inquired if the article would indeed be divided; each section would be voted separately. Donna Cabibbo clarified it would. Revisions to the Town Charter include changes to Articles II, III and IV, certain Articles have Subsections. In order to streamline the article at Town Meeting, Doug Riley's intention is to highlight the notable changes to the Charter overall as opposed to recite each Subsection. In consultation with Town Counsel, Donna Cabibbo suggested Town Meeting Participants who would like to amend any portion of this article do so in writing.

Doug Riley: Article #9 proposes amendments to several sections of the Town Charter. The amendments were submitted by the Select Board after considering the Charter Review Committee's recommendations. If the Article passes in whole or amended, the Town Meeting vote on the article would be submitted to the State Legislature for approval.

The key items included in the changes include:

- Composition of the Select Board; from three members to five. This transition would include one new member elected to a two-year term and one to a three-year term. Subsequent elections would be for a three-year term.
 - The proposed change was prompted by the time needed by an individual to serve as a Select Board Member and the ability for the board to meet a quorum.
- Changing the Town Clerk position to an appointed position as opposed to an elected position; placing the Town Clerk under the supervision of the Town Administrator.
 - The Town Clerk positions, whether elected or appointed, vary across the state.
- Changing the Town Administrator's title to Chief Administrative Officer and significantly changing the Powers and Duties of the position. The changes are outlined in the Warrant Article.
 - Many of the Powers and Duties are shifted from the Select Board to the Chief Administrative Officer regarding appointments of certain positions as well as approval of payroll and expenses.

The Finance Committee recommends approval of Article #9.

Lisa Hardin made the committee aware that in the presiding Town Charter, any amendments to the Select Board requires a recommendation by an Elected Charter Review Committee, not an appointed committee. Mike Guzinski clarified that after consultation with Town Counsel and officials at the State Attorney General's Office, the article does meet the requirements under law to be voted at Town Meeting.

Article #10 – Tree Pruning/Removal:

Joyce Boiardi: This article will transfer \$40,000.00 from Free Cash to fund the necessary pruning and tree removal throughout town. Tree pruning and removal has been an ongoing concern for citizen safety. The Finance Committee recommends approval of Article #10.

Nathan Schneider, 64 Acorn Street, inquired where the funds appropriated for Tree Pruning/Removal at the last Town Meeting, \$40,000.00, were utilized; according to Brutus Cantoreggi, Town Tree Warden, \$20,000.00 were available. The remaining funds were used to supplement the DPW's Tree Care Operating Budget. Pete Berube and Carol Johnston will provide the specific details to Mr. Schneider.

Article #11 – Funding for FY21 Snow and Ice Deficit:

Pete Berube: This article will fund the Snow and Ice Deficit from FY21 in the amount of \$78,810.00 from Free Cash. The Snow and Ice Operating Budget is the only line item allowed to run in a deficit given its unpredictability. The Finance Committee recommend approval of Article #11.

Article #12 – Unemployment Account:

John Steadman: This article will transfer from Free Cash \$25,000.00 to supplement the Town's Unemployment Fund. The Finance Committee recommends approval of Article #12.

Article #13 – OPEB (Other Post-Employment Benefits) Actuarial Study:

John Steadman: This article will transfer from Free Cash \$7,300.00 to fund the required OPEB Actuarial Study. The Finance Committee recommends approval of Article #13.

Article #14 – Establish Chapter 41 Section 111F Injury Leave Indemnity Fund:

Sara Reyes: This article will establish a fund to offset the costs to the Police and Fire Department's Operating Budget when personnel is out on injury leave. Appropriations to the fund are not being requested at this time; simply the establishment of the fund. Police and Fire and Rescue Personnel are reimbursed 100% as opposed to Worker's Compensation which is 60%. The Town's Insurance covers up to \$1,000.00 per week which does not cover the cost for shift coverage in the Police and Fire and Rescue Departments. The Finance Committee recommends approval of Article #14.

Article #15 – Rescind Balance of Unneeded Borrowing Authorizations:

Joyce Boiardi: This article will vote to rescind the approved but unused debt authorizations for the following:

- Water Street Pump Station Sewer Design: \$96,000.00
- Street Sweeper: \$28,000.00
- Water System Improvements – Chlorine Contact Loops: \$11,800.00

The Finance Committee recommends approval of Article #15.

Close Pre-Town Meeting/Public Hearing:

Pete Berube closed the Finance Committee's Pre-Town Meeting/Public Hearing at 8:42 PM.

Approve Bills Payable:

Cathy MacInnes made a motion to recommend approval of payment to Our Town Publishing in the amount of \$4,745.00; John Steadman seconded. Roll Call Vote: Pete Berube – aye, Jodie Garzon – aye, Joyce Boiardi – aye, Cathy MacInnes – aye, Sara Reyes – aye, John Steadman – aye, Peter Underhill – aye, Doug Riley – aye. Vote 8/0 motion carries unanimously.

Finance Committee Meeting Minutes Approval:

Joyce Boiardi made a motion to approve the Finance Committee's Meeting Minutes from October 6, 2021; Doug Riley seconded. Roll Call Vote: Pete Berube – aye, Jodie Garzon – aye, Doug Riley – aye, Joyce Boiardi – aye, Cathy MacInnes – aye, Sara Reyes – aye, John Steadman – aye, Peter Underhill – aye. Vote 8/0 motion carries unanimously.

Joyce Boiardi made a motion to approve the Finance Committee's Meeting Minutes from October 20, 2021; Jodie Garzon seconded. Roll Call Vote: Pete Berube – aye, Jodie Garzon – aye, Doug Riley – aye, Joyce Boiardi – aye, Cathy MacInnes – aye, Sara Reyes – aye, John Steadman – aye, Peter Underhill – aye. Vote 8/0 motion carries unanimously.

Old Business/New Business:

Pete Berube would like the committee to assign Finance Committee Liaisons to the various Boards and Committees at the next scheduled meeting. A Tri-Board Meeting which consists of the Finance Committee, Select Board and School Committee is tentatively scheduled for November 15, 2021. The Select Board Chair, Pete Jurmain, and Pete Berube have drafted an agenda and will follow up with the School Committee on items they wish to discuss. The agenda will be posted 48 hours prior to the

meeting in accordance to Open Meeting Law. It has yet to determined if the meeting will take place solely via Zoom Remote Platform or hybrid; Zoom and in person.

Adjourn Meeting:

John Steadman made a motion to adjourn the Finance Committee Meeting at 8:56 PM; Joyce Boiardi seconded. Vote: 8/0 motion carries unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,
Deirdre Gilmore